

# Existing Planning and Policy Documents

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**When I see an adult on a bicycle, I do not despair for the future of the human race. ~H.G. Wells**

The City of Clearwater's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan supports and implements numerous goals and objectives that have been previously expressed in existing planning efforts and documents within the City of Clearwater, Pinellas County, the State of Florida and throughout the United States.

## **City of Clearwater**

This is the first strategic Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan in the City of Clearwater. As such, the Master Plan expands on the vision, goals and objectives expressed in previous planning efforts and their supporting documents. The City has recognized the need for, and importance of, bicycling and walking opportunities in many of its other existing plans, such as the Strategic Vision, the Comprehensive Plan, the American with Disabilities Act Transition Plan, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Bikeways and Trails Plan.

## **Strategic Vision**

In 2003, the City of Clearwater developed a twenty-year Vision, appropriately entitled *A Strategic Vision for Two Decades*.

At the beginning of the Strategic Vision document, the following mission and vision were declared.

### **Mission**

"To provide a safe, healthy, and vibrant community to the citizens of Clearwater and a stimulating and nurturing environment for Clearwater's business community and tourists."

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## Vision

“Sparkling Clearwater is a uniquely beautiful, economically vibrant community that re-invests in itself and is a wonderful place to live, learn, work and play.

To further define the mission and the vision, the City of Clearwater established 11 overall goals. The goals stated in the Strategic Vision include the following:

- “A safe, clean, green environment.
- Diverse, high paying jobs
- High quality education
- A variety of cultural and recreational offerings
- Efficient, responsive City services
- Safe, comfortable, walkable neighborhoods
- Well-maintained housing stock in all markets
- A vibrant downtown that is mindful of its heritage
- Well maintained infrastructure
- Efficient transportation systems
- A quality beach environment”

The creation and implementation of a Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan supports and is a critical component to implement four of the above stated goals.

Bicycle and pedestrian provisions support a safe, clean, green environment by promoting the use of alternative transportation. By reducing the number of motor vehicle trips, bicycling and walking improve our air quality. The implementation of a *Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* is also essential to achieve safe, comfortable, walkable neighborhoods, a vibrant downtown, and efficient transportation systems.

## City of Clearwater

### Parks and Recreation Master Plan

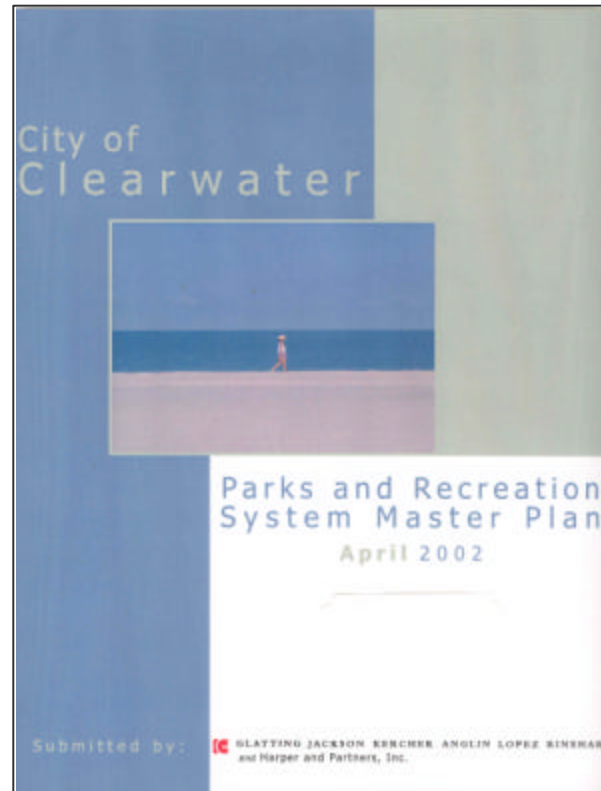
The *City of Clearwater’s Parks and Recreation System Master Plan* was adopted in April, 2002. The Master Plan process utilized interviews, focus groups, workshops and telephone surveys and included a review of the current recreation and open space system, resulting in projected future needs for the city.

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As part of the introduction, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan presented an ideal system model. This model “is comprised of a variety of parks, natural lands, urban open spaces and other greenspace ‘nodes’, linked by a network of greenways, trails, bikeways and other ‘connectors’.” This ideal model recognizes the importance of connectors that provide access to park and recreation facilities.

To further support the importance of connectors, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan’s Needs and Priorities Assessment identified the completion of sidewalks, bike lanes and multiple use paths as a Priority Need. In addition to identifying priorities, it also proposed an Action Plan to address the implementation of those priorities.



Two of the plan’s identified Priority Actions (2003 to 2008) are directly supported by the *Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan*:

- Complete the city sidewalk system and adjust the City policy of sidewalk approvals.
- Fund the completion of proposed trail projects, providing pedestrian connections to neighborhoods where possible.

In addition to the items in the Priority Actions, the *Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* also reinforces two items identified as Continuous Actions/Policies:

- Construct proposed bike lane projects.
- Improve existing transit stops, trails and sidewalk systems.

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## Parks and Recreation Priority Actions

- Complete Sidewalk System
- Fund the completion of proposed trail projects
- Provide pedestrian connection to neighborhoods where possible

The development of a *Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* supports the *Parks and Recreation System Master Plan*, and will refine and implement action items that have already been identified.

## City of Clearwater Comprehensive Plan

The *Comprehensive Plan* presents the City's future goals, objectives and policies. The

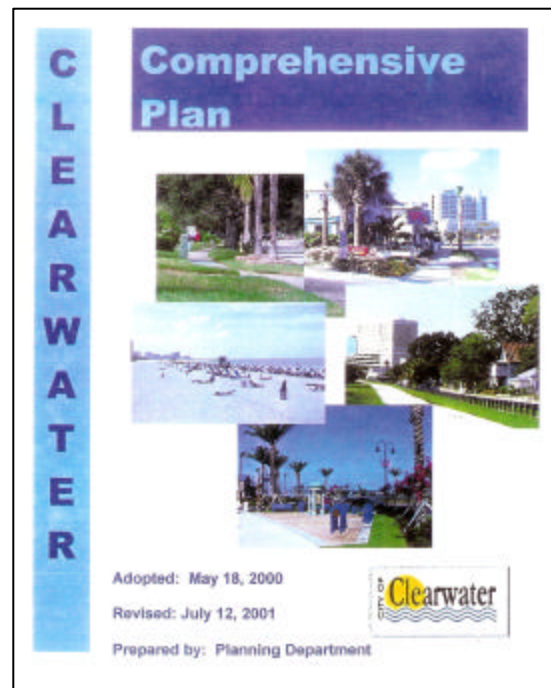
plan addresses these goals by subject area, including Future Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Utilities, Coastal Management, Conservation, Recreation and Open Space, Intergovernmental Coordination, and Capital Improvements.

The *Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* supports and implements specific Goals and Objectives of the *Comprehensive Plan* in both the Transportation Element and Recreation and Open Space Element.

## Transportation Element- Traffic Circulation

The overall goal stated in the transportation element of the *Comprehensive Plan* is as follows:

“The traffic circulation system shall provide for the safe, convenient and efficient delivery of people and goods by a multimodal transportation system.”



The provision of bicycle and pedestrian transportation is essential to the establishment of a multimodal transportation system within the City of Clearwater. Multimodal transportation system planning considers a wide variety of transportation alternatives

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(instead of focusing on a single mode) to move people and goods more efficiently.

Viable transportation alternatives are those that increase transportation supply, such as new roadways, new bicycle lanes, transit, air and port facilities and those that reduce demand, such as rideshare programs and the provision of non-motorized amenities (bike racks, lockers, etc.)

The *Comprehensive Plan* lists six objectives that support the transportation goal. The first objective includes specific language that addresses bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The specific objective is as follows:

“Every expansion or extension of arterial and collector streets shall be constructed consistent with Florida Department of Transportation engineering standards where possible. These include accommodations for bicycles in a fourteen (14) foot wide curb lane, or 11-12 foot wide curb lane with 4’ wide designated bike lane where possible, and the provision of sidewalks on both sides of the road.”

## Recreation and Open Space

As bicycling and walking are not only transportation modes, they also provide important recreation benefits. Thus, bicycling and walking are also addressed in the Recreation and Open Space section of the *Comprehensive Plan*. The Recreation and Open Space goal is as follows:

“ To develop a system of open spaces, parks and recreation facilities which are designed for the maximum satisfaction of the recreational needs of Clearwater’s residents and tourists.”

To support the Recreation and Open Space goal, five objectives are expressed. The first objective includes policies that specifically recognize the need for and includes bicycle and pedestrian access issues. The specific policies are as follows:

- “Continue to provide automobile and bicycle parking facilities at all community parks.
- Continue to provide automobile and bicycle parking facilities at public beaches. “

The provision of bicycle parking at recreation destinations is fundamental to encourage visitors to utilize alternative transportation modes.



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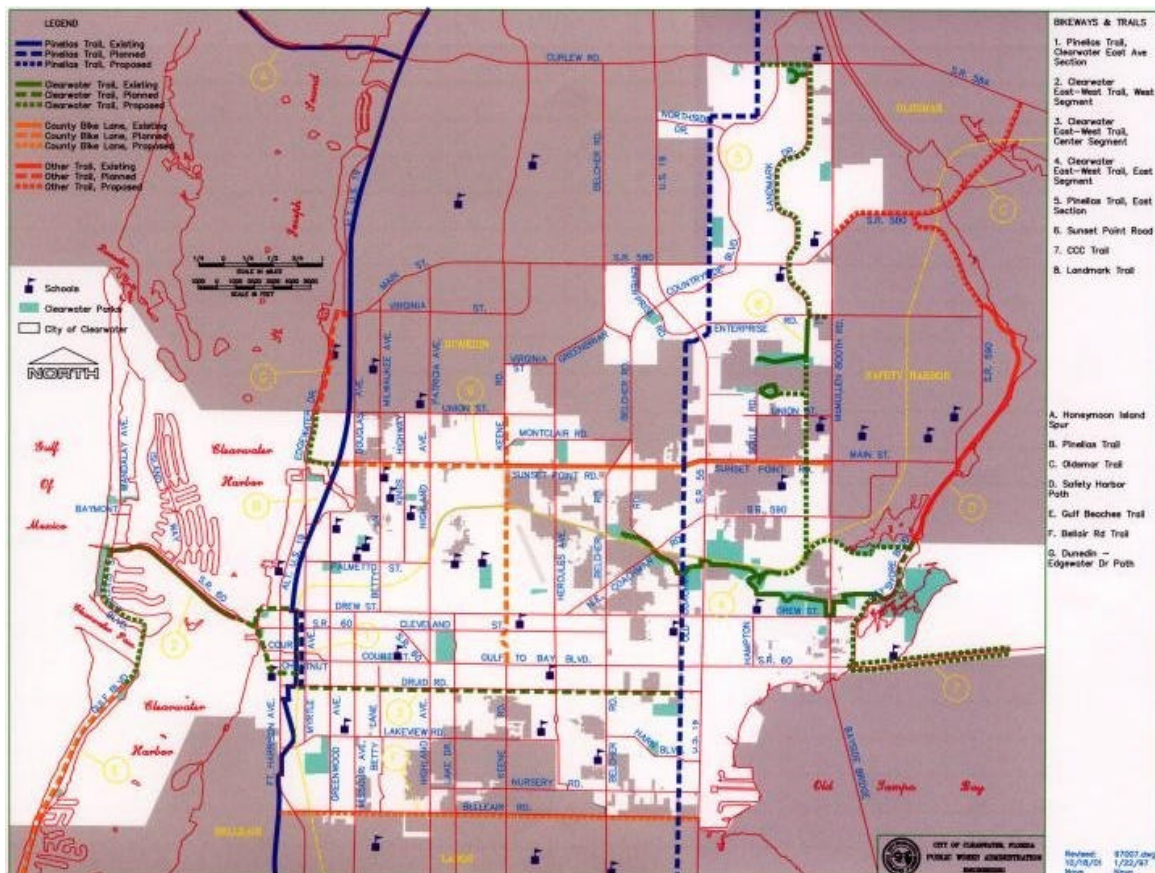
## City of Clearwater Bikeways and Trails Plan

In 1996, the City of Clearwater Parks and Recreation Department completed a *Bikeways and Trails Plan*.

*The Bikeways and Trails Plan* represents Clearwater's first effort to identify the specific needs of bicyclists within the roadway environment and trails users within a network of trails.

This plan includes elements of safety and education, enforcement, publicity, design standards and specifically proposes trail projects.

Some of the trail projects that were proposed in the *Bikeways and Trails Plan*, include



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the Clearwater East-West Trail, the Florida Progress Energy Trail and the Landmark Drive Trail. The Clearwater East-West Trail proposal consisted of several sections: Bayshore Boulevard, Druid Trail (from Progress Energy Trail to Pinellas Trail), and the Memorial Causeway Trail (from Pinellas Trail to Clearwater Beach).

In addition to trails, the *Bikeways and Trails Plan* also recommended several bicycle lane improvements including bicycle lanes along Sunset Point Road, Keene Road and Bellair Road.

## **City of Clearwater American with Disabilities Transition Plan**

In 1992, The City of Clearwater created its *American with Disabilities (ADA) Transition Plan* as required by the American with Disabilities Act of 1990. The Transition Plan identified physical barriers in City of Clearwater facilities, which limit accessibility of programs and activities to individuals with disabilities. The Transition Plan also established the Public Works Department as having responsibility of implementing the infrastructure related features of the ADA regarding sidewalks. *The Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* supports the ADA Transition Plan goals by improving of our existing environment including sidewalks and the prioritization of sidewalk segments as part of the Implementation Plan.

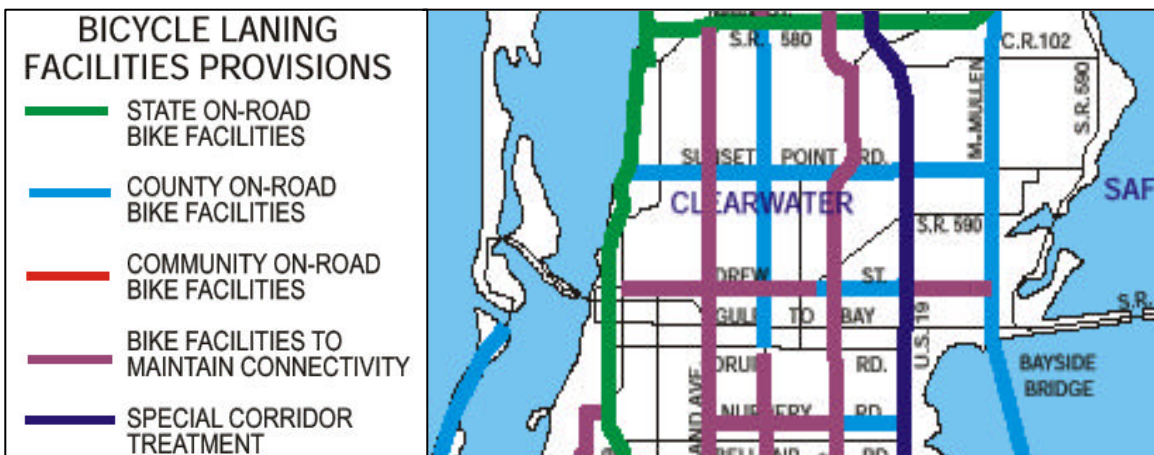
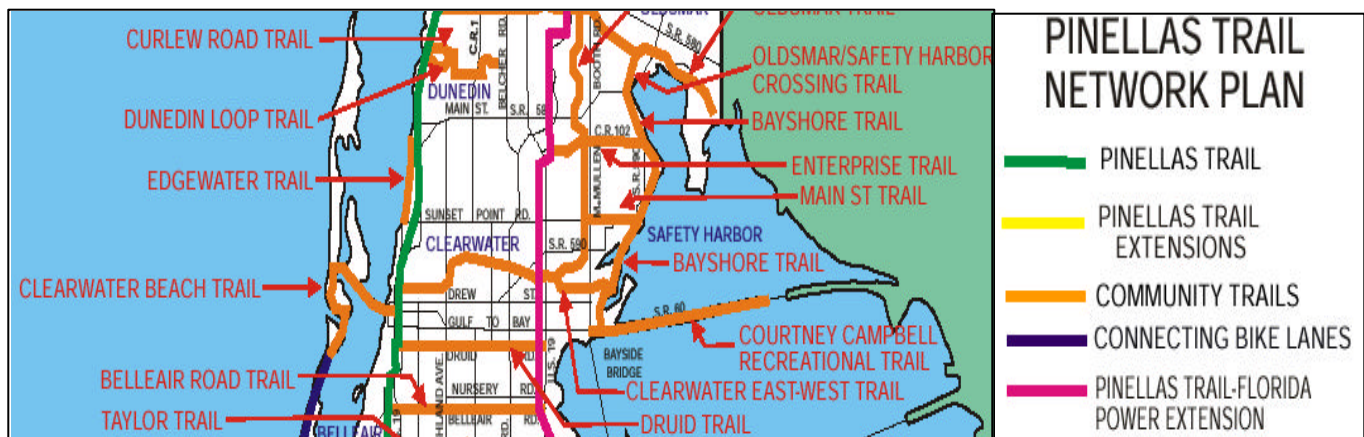
## **Pinellas County**

In addition to expanding the vision, goals and objectives of the City of Clearwater, the *Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* also supports many goals and objectives as established by Pinellas County in the *Pinellas Metropolitan Planning Organization's Long Range Transportation Plan*.

## **Pinellas MPO Long Range Transportation Plan**

*The Pinellas MPO Long Range Transportation Plan* (LRTP) examines the transportation needs of Pinellas County and recommends modifications that address needs for the next 20 years.

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The L RTP document contains policies, data and analysis that seek to promote the safe, effective and efficient movement of people and goods. Some of the included topics are congestion management, new road building projects and expansion of existing roadways, bicycle and pedestrian safety issues, expansion of trails and mass transit systems, goods movement, air quality and funding.

The *City of Clearwater's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* is consistent with and supports goal number two which states, "Promote liveable community concepts that allow for people to travel freely and safely in the urban environment through non-motorized travel modes such as walking, bicycling and skating."

Goal number two was further refined to include four objectives that the *City of Clearwater Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* will enhance:



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- “Increase bicycle and pedestrian travel throughout Pinellas County for commuting to employment and school sites, as well as for recreational purposes.
- Ensure the safe movement of cyclists, pedestrians, inline/roller skaters and other non-motorized modes of travel.
- Develop an interconnected network of on-street bicycle lanes to ensure the safe movement of bicyclists on the county’s major roadways.
- Ensure the safe movement of people along roadways and within the areas of their origin and destination.”

In the Future Improvements section of the LRTP, the Pinellas County MPO identifies sidewalk improvements, trail segments and bicycle lane projects, which the *City of Clearwater Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* supports.

## **State of Florida and the United States**

Improving the pedestrian and bicycle environment within the City of Clearwater also advances the goals and policies and initiatives of the State of Florida and the United States in many areas, including transportation, air quality, energy, public health and natural resources.

## **Transportation**

Intermodalism or the “use of more than one form of transportation” (USDOT) gained great support the early 1990s with landmark national legislation. The *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act* (ISTEA) of 1991 and the subsequent *Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century* (TEA-21) of 1998 recognized bicycling and walking as modes of transportation being essential to a balanced transportation system.

In the spirit of, and reflective of, this national transportation legislation, the U.S. Department of Transportation issued a key policy statement, *Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel: A Recommended Approach* (March, 2000). This policy statement was issued with significant input from public agencies, professional associations and advocacy groups. It reinforces the recognition of the importance of bicycling and walking to the creation of a balanced transportation system.

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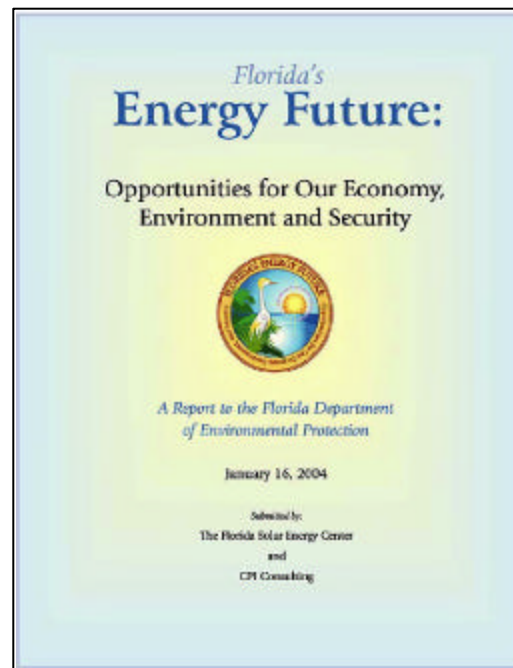
Consistent with the national legislation, Florida's Department of Transportation also recognizes the importance of integrating bicycling and walking into the transportation system. The *2020 Florida Transportation Plan* has four goal categories: safe transportation, system management, economic competitiveness and quality of life. Within these four general categories, there are specific objectives that relate to non-motorized transportation:

- "Reduce the rates of motor vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian fatalities,
- Design the transportation system to include human scale, pedestrian, bicycle, transit-oriented and other community-enhancing features, where appropriate,
- Design the transportation system in a way that sustains human and natural environments and conserves non-renewable resources, and
- Increase access to, and use of, alternatives to the single-occupant vehicle."

## Air Quality

Bicycling and walking, as modes of transportation, enhance state and national initiatives and programs that seek to improve air quality. Increasing bicycling and walking activity, for commuting and other trips, reduces the number of motor vehicle trips. Reducing motor vehicle trips reduces harmful motor vehicle emissions, including volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen oxides (NOx). Reduction in the motor vehicle emissions improves our air quality. Bicycling and walking have no tailpipe emissions, no evaporative emissions, no emissions from gasoline pumping or oil refining, and no carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases.

Currently, Pinellas County is designated as a "Maintenance Area" by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, after being designated as a nonattainment area in 1990. Since then, ozone levels have lowered to acceptable levels and the county is now "maintaining" these levels. Emission budgets for VOCs and NOx must not be exceeded in order to continue receiving federal funds for highway construction projects.



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Nationally, walking and bicycling supports the goals of the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and programs of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21).

Statewide, walking and bicycling activity support the environmental goals of *Communities for a Lifetime initiative* (State of Florida's Department of Elder Affairs). One of their specific objectives is to "Encourage the use of environment-friendly transportation modes, such as bicycles".

## Energy

In May 2000, Governor Jeb Bush created the Florida Energy 2020 Study Commission. In January 2004, the commission's final report, entitled, *Florida's Energy Future*, recognized bicycling and walking as energy efficient modes of transportation. According to the report, transportation accounts for 36% of Florida's energy use. Transportation only accounts for 27% of our national energy use.

*Florida's Energy Future* presents a number of recommendations that encourage more bicycle and pedestrian transportation including:

- Reduce vehicle miles traveled per capita (adjusted for changes in tourism ) by 3 percent per year.
- Invest in bikeways, trails and sidewalks as part of community-based transportation networks, making sure they link residences with destinations.
- Provide educational programs and technical assistance to MPOs, RPCs and local communities that stress the benefits of land use designed to reduce VMT.

In addition to supporting the recommendations of *Florida's Energy Future*, the *City of Clearwater's Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* also supports the current efforts of the National Energy Policy. Although the National Energy Policy Act of 2003 is yet to be adopted, it recognizes and supports the provision of non-motorized transportation trips to conserve energy.

## Public Health

In recent years there have been several initiatives at the state and national levels, that specifically address health issues such as physical activity (or inactivity) and obesity.

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Improvements to the bicycling and walking environment promote greater physical activity, which reduces obesity.

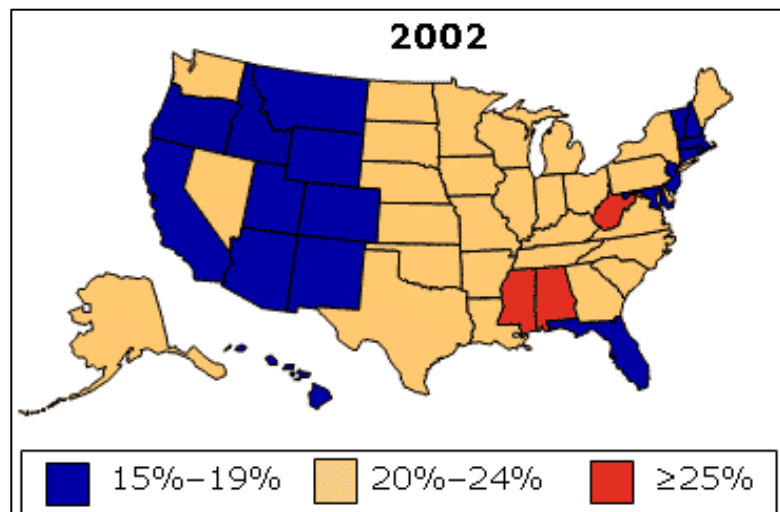
In 2000, poor diet (including obesity) and physical inactivity caused 400,000 U.S. deaths. This accounts for more than 16% of all deaths and is the number two underlying preventable cause of death after tobacco consumption according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention and the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. One of the national health objectives for the year 2010 is to reduce obesity among adults to less than 15%. In 2002, twenty states had obesity prevalence rates of 15-19% (including Florida); 29 states had rates of 20-24%; and one state reported a rate over 25%.

In the State of Florida, 57% of Florida adults are overweight or obese (CDC BRFSS, 2002), and 25% of Florida high school students are overweight or at risk of being overweight (CDC YRBSS, 2001). In addition, the obesity rate among Florida adults increased by 43% from 1990 to 2002 (CDC BRFSS, 2002).

To target both physical inactivity and obesity, the CDC developed many programs, including Active Community Environments (ACEs), KidsWalk-to-School and State-based Nutrition and Physical Activity Programs. While these initiatives address both inactivity and obesity, ACEs

specifically promote walking, bicycling, and the development of accessible recreation facilities. KidsWalk-to-School encourages children to walk and bicycle to and from school, and also encourages regular physical activity for children, improved pedestrian safety, and healthy and walkable community environments.

Another national initiative, *Healthy People 2010*, (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) seeks to increase



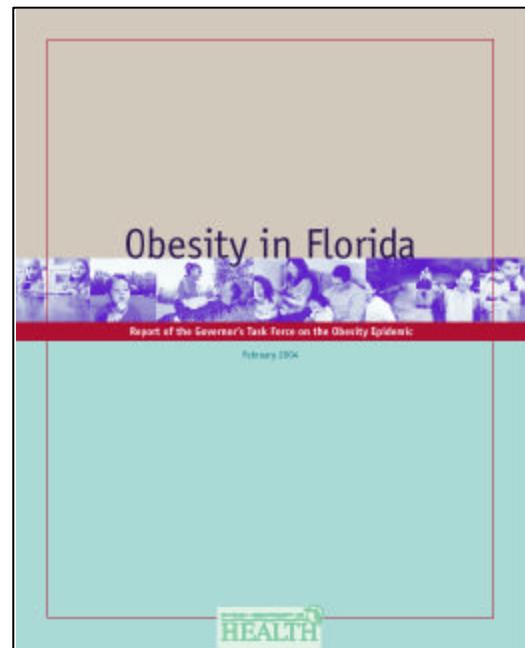
CDC Obesity Rates

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the quality and years of healthy life. Two of their primary objectives also address physical activity and obesity. Walking and bicycling activity also support *The Surgeon General's Call To Action To Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*. Some of the Surgeon General's specific strategies include requiring physical education at all school grades and providing safe, accessible recreational facilities for residents of all ages.

In October, 2003, Governor Jeb Bush formed the Governor's Task Force on the Obesity Epidemic to present recommendations to address the problem of overweight and obesity in Florida. The Task Force completed their study and presented *Obesity on Florida* in February 2004.



Some of the specific recommendations that relate directly to bicycling and walking include:

- "Communities must review local environments and assess where improvements for physical activity opportunities may be implemented and should invest in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and review transit-oriented development to promote 'walkable' and 'bikeable' communities and should review long-term planning efforts to ensure that numerous physical activity options are available to residents for safe areas to exercise and play.

**57% of Florida adults are obese  
25% of Florida High School Students are  
overweight or at risk for overweight**

- State and local agencies responsible for community planning ensure that policies are routinely considered for

accommodating pedestrians and bicyclists and others who share the roadways and pathways in each community and ensure that communities have bicycle and pedestrian development plans as part of their planning process for new construction.



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These agencies must also advocate for improved planning for new construction and determine the possibility of retrofitting current communities to designate safe areas for adults and children to exercise and play. This includes improvements for sidewalks, street lighting, traffic calming, and other environmentally safe constructs that encourage physical activity.

- Schools should work with local transit and community planning organizations to ensure safe routes to schools so that students and staff can walk or ride bikes to school”.

## Natural Resources

The development of greenways and trails preserves important natural resources, connects natural habitats and presents opportunities for protecting plant and animal species. Greenways and trails also support various objectives of natural resource conservation efforts at state and federal levels. Nationally, walking and bicycling activity supports the mission of the United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, which seeks to provide leadership to help people conserve, maintain, and improve natural resources and environment.

In the State of Florida, the development of greenways and trails directly supports the State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s *Long Range Program Plan*. Objective 5 of the plan specifically addresses the Enhancement of the Quality of Life and Recreation. Objective 5B is to “Increase recreational opportunities and alternative modes of transportation in a manner that balances resource protection with responsible public use through the establishment of a statewide system of greenways and trails.”

## Conclusion

As demonstrated in this section of the Existing Environment chapter, the *Clearwater Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* expands, supports and implements many other planning and policy efforts of the City of Clearwater, the State of Florida and the United States in areas of parks and recreation, land use, air quality, natural resources, health, transportation and energy.

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Some of the plans that the *Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* expands and supports are:

- *Strategic Vision*
- *Parks and Recreation Master Plan Bikeways and Trails Plan Comprehensive Plan*
- *American with Disabilities Act Transition Plan*
- *Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization's Long Range Transportation Plan*

In addition to local and regional efforts, both bicycling and walking enhancements support state and national goals in the areas of transportation, public health, air quality, energy and natural resources.